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Annual ministerial review: achieving the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and the empowerment of women

Statement submitted by Fondation Ostad Elahi: éthique et solidarité humaine, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2010/100.

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Statement

In response to the topic of the 2010 annual ministerial review, echoing the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which is still relevant, and taking from the fifty-fourth session of the Commission on the Status of Women the slogan and the conclusion that we must empower women as never before, a panel met on 26 March 2010 on the premises of the French Economic, Social and Environmental Council, at the initiative of the Fondation Ostad Elahi: éthique et solidarité humaine and in partnership with Ateliers de la terre and under the auspices of the International Association of Economic and Social Councils and Similar Institutions. The panel, attended by representatives of that International Association, academicians, managers and leaders of trade unions and associations, considered the topic "How to achieve professional equality" and made the following recommendations.

Attitudes have not kept pace with the legal framework, which may be well developed, as it is in France. The determination of States must be expressed more forcefully in their communication policy through national campaigns promoting equality. The issue of equality must be mainstreamed in all aspects of society (such as corporate governance, employment, wages, housing, wealth sharing) and mechanisms must be provided for monitoring and oversight. Greater efforts must be made to end sexist stereotypical behaviour (in the European Union, between 30 and 50 per cent of working women have been subjected either to harassment or to sexist violence in the workplace).

A ministry responsible for professional equality and parity must be established or re-established to provide encouragement and monitoring and annual reports on results achieved.

Mechanisms already exist for implementing equality policies, such as the Professional Equality Certification introduced by the French Government in 2004 and awarded by the certifying agency Association française de normalisation. Equivalent initiatives exist in Europe and elsewhere. A European gender equality award was inaugurated in Brussels on 8 April 2010. New mechanisms must be created and/or adapted for small and medium-size enterprises.

Professional equality necessitates a new social contract between women and men, which must evolve at several levels and in particular:

- In the education system: education is crucial to transform the image that men and women have of each other and, for example, to change the way in which household tasks are shared. Appropriate curricula must be developed, focused on ethics and mutual rights and duties.
- In professional life: in addition to career development and elimination of wage gaps, new working arrangements must be developed. One key measure could be to require paternity leave of the same length as maternity leave, with full pay for both parents during such leave.